

The Random Jottings of Donald Jay from Nelson in Pendle.

### The Camp at Thornton-in-Craven

The Camp at Thornton-in-Craven was a place of turmoil and conflict during the civil wars. The castle at Skipton, held by Sir John Malory and his loyalist garrison, faced a prolonged siege by General Lambert and his soldiers from the Commonwealth. As the siege continued, the Cromwellians established strong garrisons at Thornton and Fisburne, not only to provide forage for their troops but also to suppress the Royalist presence in East Lancashire and the neighboring valleys.

In this volatile environment, Edward Parker, a resident of Browsholme, found himself caught in the crossfire. Both sides repeatedly plundered his house, taking valuables such as silverware, clothing, and even livestock. Seeking protection, Parker obtained letters from both the Roundheads and the Royalists, pleading for his property and person to be spared. These letters served as temporary shields against the rampant pillaging.

Meanwhile, the Lancashire aristocracy indulged in more lighthearted pursuits amidst the chaos of war. In a letter from July 1688, a certain A. Pudsey invited Edward Parker to join him in attending a footrace near Leeds. They planned to meet at Bolton or Gisborne, and Pudsey hoped Parker would accompany him, envisioning a day of entertainment and camaraderie with other acquaintances. The letter revealed a brief respite from the harsh realities of the ongoing conflict. Returning to the camp at Thornton, the Roundheads launched a raid into Briercliffe and Extwistle, targeting Royalist supporters. They ransacked High Halstead, causing an uproar that reached Edward Parker's ears. Swiftly, he gathered his cattle and hid them in Runclehurst Wood, while also securing most of the valuables in his hall. Frustrated by their inability to access the hidden goods, the raiders attempted to set fire to the place, but their hasty departure limited the damage inflicted.

Amidst these events, Prince Rupert and his army arrived in Lancashire, aiming to relieve the besieged Lathom House. General Rigby, in command of the besiegers, withdrew to Bolton with his troops. The storming of Bolton soon followed, leading to the Royalists flooding into the Burnley valley on their way to join the King's forces in York. They splintered into smaller groups to forage along their route, indiscriminately plundering both allies and adversaries. One group of 200 soldiers descended upon Worsthorne, seizing food and drink from the farmers' larders. The officers established themselves at an old public house, known as "Cross House," while the common soldiers took shelter in barns and shippings for the night. The next morning, they drove off the cattle from the surrounding fields. Fueled by anger at their mistreatment, the farmers armed themselves and pursued the marauders, desperate to rescue their stolen livestock. At Cockden Water, a handful of straggling soldiers fell behind, giving the pursuing farmers an opportunity to catch up. A fierce struggle erupted near Miss Halstead's barn, resulting in the deaths of two farmers, Peter Hitchon of Worsthorne and Barnard Smith of Hurstwood. Their names would later be recorded in the Burnley Parish Church register, commemorating their sacrifice in the face of the invaders.

The story of the Camp at Thornton-in-Craven captures the chaos and hardships faced by the people of Lancashire during the civil wars. It is a tale of plunder and protection, of respite and revelry, and ultimately, of the grim reality that war leaves in its wake.

By Donald Jay